



AOT in Action

TOURISM WORKS FOR ARIZONA!

Welcome to AOT in Action, your weekly e-newsletter from the Arizona Office of Tourism (AOT).

A Message from the Director:

Good morning.

Congratulations to Robert Brinton, President and CEO of the Mesa Convention and Visitors Bureau, for being named "Mesa Man of the Year!" Robert has been a tremendous leader in our industry, having led the Mesa CVB for most of its 25 years, and his service in tourism development and promotion for the city of Mesa as well as the Grand Canyon State is extraordinary and much appreciated.

As we celebrate this holiday season with friends and loved ones, I hope you'll have the opportunity to get out and discover some of Arizona's amazing destinations.

If you're looking for ideas, please be sure to check out www.ArizonaGuide.com for a full calendar of holiday events occurring around the state.

I extend my warm holiday wishes to you and your family, and thank you for everything you do for our industry and your communities.

Happy Holidays,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads 'Margie A. Emmermann'. The script is fluid and cursive, with the first name 'Margie' being more prominent.

Margie A. Emmermann
Director
Arizona Office of Tourism

AOT News Flash

New Updates on AOT's Research Section

The following items have been updated in the Research and Statistics section of AOT's business-to-business Web site www.azot.gov.

- Arizona Tourism Indicators Newsletter 3rd Quarter 2008 (*to be posted by the afternoon of Tuesday, December 23rd*)
- [Local Visitor Information Centers Visitation 3rd Quarter 2008](#)
- [National Park Visitation October 2008](#)
- [Painted Cliffs Welcome Center Visitation 3rd Quarter 2008](#)
- [Phoenix Convention Center Visitor Center Visitation 3rd Quarter 2008](#)

For additional information or questions, please contact Beth Billings, Research Specialist, at 602-364-3689 or via e-mail at bbillings@azot.gov.

Call for all Calendar of Event Items

The Arizona Office of Tourism is requesting 2009 event information to be considered for the Calendar of Events posted on www.ArizonaGuide.com. These items encourage tourists to experience special occasions held throughout Arizona. For events to be considered, they must be open to the public and of interest to tourists.

Submissions should include the date and year; community in which the event takes place; name of event; venue; venue address; description of event; admission, event time; phone number and/or Web site for the public to obtain additional information.

Please include your contact information along with your submission so that we may reach you with any questions we may have prior to posting your event. Photography to accompany listings may be included, and we can supply you with an image information form. If you have questions or would like an event submission form, please contact Marjorie Magnusson at Mmagnusson@azot.gov or 602-364-3695.

Don't Forget to Place Your Travel Deals Online

AOT's consumer Web site, www.ArizonaGuide.com, offers visitors a Travel Deals web page for a listing of special deals and packages. Visitors can find special offers for Bowl Games, Holiday travel and Romantic deals.

If you are a supplier, you may directly post tourism related specials, discounts or packages by visiting www.azot.gov and clicking on Travel Deals. There is no charge to list a package on the Travel Deals section. If you have questions or need additional assistance, contact Marjorie Magnusson at mmagnusson@azot.gov or 602-364-3695.

Trippin' with AOT

Toronto Golf Show Participation and Brochure Distribution Opportunity

AOT invites you to exhibit at the Toronto Star Golf & Travel Show in Toronto, Ontario, February 27 - March 1, 2009. This consumer show expects to attract more than 30,000 Canadian golfers during a three-day period. The cost is \$800 plus travel expenses and shipping expenses. Additionally, AOT is offering the opportunity to have your brochures distributed for \$250, plus

shipping. Space is limited. If you are interested in participating in this event, please contact Kristy Swanson at 602-364-3696 or via e-mail at kswanson@azot.gov.

AOT to Conduct Sales Mission in Mexico

Mexico is one of Arizona's most important international markets. To further increase awareness of the Grand Canyon State, the Arizona Office of Tourism will coordinate a sales mission to Mexico in February 2009 and we would like to invite you to participate.

Each year, AOT coordinates a sales mission to reach out to the second tier cities in Mexico – cities that are not typically reached through our other promotions. This year we will target Puebla, Queretaro and Leon during a five-day mission scheduled for the week of February 23 – 27, 2009. We will host breakfast seminars in each city and invite local travel agents and tour operators to attend. Additionally we will coordinate small media luncheons with two – four journalists in each city.

For additional information and to obtain a participation form, please contact Loretta Belonio at lbelonio@azot.gov or 602-364-3725.

Arizona Enjoys Statewide Exposure in London Show

Arizona was very well represented recently during World Travel Market in London. World Travel Market is the premier global event for the travel industry and the largest travel trade show in the United Kingdom. The event, held November 10-13, showcased vacation destinations from around the world and attracted travel professionals and media from all over the UK and Europe. In addition to the AOT staff, the Arizona delegation consisted of the Greater Phoenix Convention and Visitors Bureau (CVB), Scottsdale CVB, Tucson CVB, Flagstaff CVB, Maverick Aviation Group, Ranches of Southern Arizona, Hospitality Suite Resort, Arizona Biltmore Resort & Spa, and Best Western Grand Canyon Squire Inn. During the four-day event, appointments were held with nearly 50 tour operators and travel journalists to review their current destinations and to look at ways to expand their Arizona product information.

For additional information or a copy of the World Travel Market Lead report contact Loretta Belonio at 602-364-3725 or via e-mail at lbelonio@azot.gov.

Industry News

AOT Congratulates Mesa CVB President and CEO

The Arizona Office of Tourism congratulates Robert Brinton, President and CEO of the Mesa Convention and Visitors Bureau for being named "Mesa Man of the Year." As one of tourism's dedicated and vibrant leaders, Robert has been an active committee member for many industry-related groups. Robert was the founding president of the Foundation for Mesa Parks & Arts, past member of the Mesa Museum & Cultural Advisory Board, past president of the Mesa Sisters Cities Association, president of the Mesa HoHoKams and past chair of the Mesa Parks & Recreations advisory Board. Robert has also been active in committees beyond Mesa that have contributed to expanding the volume of travelers to the Grand Canyon State. He was the founding member and past president of the Cactus League Baseball Association, member of the Super Bowl XXX Cities Committee, past member of the AOT's Tourism Advisory Council, past member of the Proposition 302 committee and member of the Arizona Tourism Alliance. Robert will be awarded this highly-regarded distinction at a banquet ceremony on Tuesday, February 17, 2009.

International Visitation Up 8% in First 9 Months of '08

The Commerce Department says 39 million international visitors traveled to the U.S. during the first nine months of 2008, an increase of 8 percent over the same period in 2007. In September, total visitation was 4.1 million, flat when compared to September 2007. International visitors spent \$108.4 billion from January through September, an increase of 22 percent over the first nine months of 2007. Year-to-date 2008, Canadian visitation grew nearly 12 percent over the same period in 2007, driven by land arrivals, which were up 12 percent. Air arrivals increased 11 percent. Arrivals from Mexico, traveling to interior U.S. points, decreased 6 percent during the first nine months of 2008. Air arrivals from Mexico were down 5 percent. Overseas arrivals, excluding Canada and Mexico, increased 5 percent in September and 9 percent year-to-date. Visitation from overseas markets has grown for 17 consecutive months. Details at www.tinet.ita.doc.gov. (*Special to TA*)

U.S. to be Lenient on Airlines over Visa Waiver Rule

The government is telling travelers from Visa Waiver Program countries that Jan. 12 is the mandatory deadline for complying with a new requirement that they obtain an electronic authorization prior to travel, but it turns out that "mandatory" is relative, says Travel Weekly. Customs and Border Protection has quietly advised airlines that they won't be penalized if they allow affected passengers to travel to the U.S. without the required authorization. Normally, airlines can face civil penalties and detention and transport costs if they transport passengers who don't have proper documents. Under the Electronic System for Travel Authorization program, passengers from Visa Waiver countries must log onto a secure U.S. Government Web site, transmit itinerary information and wait for a return message. The authorization is good for two years.

The system became mandatory for seven countries newly admitted to the Visa Waiver Program last month and becomes mandatory for 27 other countries on Jan. 12. But there is concern in the industry that travelers and travel professionals overseas aren't getting the word., The Travel Industry Association and others have argued that there should be a non-Internet method for passengers to comply as well as some sort of kiosk at foreign airports where they can obtain last-minute authorizations, but the Department of Homeland Security has not resolved those concerns, citing a lack of funding. ([www.Travel Weekly.com](http://www.TravelWeekly.com), 12/12)

TIA Outlines Strategy to Support Travel

The Travel Industry Association, which will become the U.S. Travel Association next year, is outlying the group's new strategy for supporting the U.S. travel industry through difficult economic times and making sure that the incoming Obama administration understands its importance. In a conference call to members last week, Roger Dow, president and CEO of TIA, who will serve in the same capacity for the new USTA, said the group will continue its efforts to push the Travel Promotion Act through Congress. The bill made through the House, but due to the election year, ran out of time in the Senate. The group will also strive to educate policymakers on how travel now only contributes substantially to the economy but can benefit the country diplomatically. Details at www.tia.org. (www.TravelPulse.com, 12/12)

Experts See Strongest Buyer's Market in 33 Years

The lodging industry is experiencing the strongest buyer's market in 33 years with no recovery on the horizon across demand segments, industry analyst Bjorn Hanson said last week. Hanson, an associate professor at New York University's Tisch Center, said that amid the recession, corporate negotiated rates for 2009 now are expected to increase on average in the 0.5 percent to 1 percent range, well below the inflation level. Even in New York, which had been seeing double-digit

percentage year-over-year rate increases in past years, should increase only about 5 percent, Hanson said. Hotels also are negotiating amenities--free breakfast and fitness center usage, for example--as a package deal more so than in the past, according to Hanson. "The shift in the balance of power from seller to buyer happened as dramatically as at any time in history," Hanson said. (www.BusinessTravelNews.com, 12/11)

Holiday Travel Declines

The nation's economic downturn is strongly affecting holiday travel, prompting last-minute airfare sales and a decrease in overall transit, according to industry and government experts. After more than a year of increases in fares, airlines are offering discounts on routes to less popular destinations and on flights scheduled on slow days, experts who track the airline industry say. "I haven't seen a holiday season like this since 9/11," said Tom Parsons of Bestfares.com, referring to the drop in travel after the 2001 terrorist attacks. Parsons predicts fares will drop substantially in the New Year and suggests that travelers cancel high-cost existing reservations and take advantage of better deals starting in January. Even with the \$150 that some carriers charge to change tickets, travelers may still save money, he says. (*Page 1A, USA Today*)

Travel in 2009 May Be the Year's Best Trend

The value of the U.S. dollar is on the rise, gas prices are at their lowest levels in four years and hotel rates are softening. If you can afford a vacation, 2009 will be "the year of travel deals," predicts Genevieve Shaw Brown, senior editor of Travelocity. "As long as the economic slowdown continues, deals will abound for people who do have discretionary income to travel." Pauline Frommer, the guidebook writer, agreed. "Because of the sharp drop off in bookings, we're seeing some pretty deep discounts to just about everywhere," she said, citing as an example Walt Disney World's offer of seven nights for the price of four. "It's definitely going to be a buyers' market next year." But even though travel is becoming more affordable, more people are expected to stay home due to the recession. The Travel Industry Association predicts a 1.3 per cent drop in 2009 leisure travel. To read the entire article, [click here](#). (*Travelmole Newsletter*)

Surefire Strategies for Marketing to Generation Y

They're called Generation Y, Millennials, Echo Boomers, and Connecteds - By whatever name, this generation of youth born after 1977 represents more than 70 million consumers in the United States.

They earn a total annual income of about \$211 billion, spend approximately \$172 billion per year** and considerably influence many adult consumer buying choices, so no longer are they the youth that will be seen but not heard -- and marketing professionals need to take notice!

Generation Y cannot be reached through traditional marketing channels. Direct mail, print ads, and television advertising bounce off these powerful consumers like bullets on Superman's chest. They are impermeable to the marketing messages that appealed to their parents and grandparents. Generation Y represents a massive group of influencers -- the largest, and the most cutting edge generation in our history. They cut their teeth on technology, grew up with the knowledge they could do anything (because their parents and teachers told them so!), and the desire to make a difference in their world.

This article from [4Hoteliers](#) suggests ten strategies for breaking through the marketing barrier of a group that can choose their own music without listening to a commercial radio station, can block outsiders from their social circle -- which revolves around cell phones and online networks like

Facebook and MySpace -- and only refer to newspapers when they need packing material to move on to their next venue.

DHS Expands Collection of Biometrics for Visitors

The Department of Homeland Security announced Thursday that it is expanding the categories of non-U.S. citizens required to provide digital fingerprints and a photograph upon entry to the United States through the US-VISIT program. US-VISIT records biographic and biometric information to conduct security checks and verify the identification of international visitors to the U.S. Additional non-U.S. citizens required to provide biometrics now include lawful permanent residents of the United States; persons entering the U.S. who seek admission on immigrant visas; persons entering the U.S. who seek admission as refugees and asylees; and Canadian citizens who are currently required to obtain a Form I-94, Arrival/Departure Document upon entry or require a waiver of inadmissibility to enter the U.S. This excludes most Canadians entering the U.S. for purposes of shopping, visiting friends and family, vacation or short business trips. (*Special to TA*)

Travel, Tourism Spending Drops in Third Quarter

The Commerce Department's Bureau of Economic Analysis reported this week that spending on tourism and travel dropped at an annual rate of 8.1% in the third quarter, the largest decrease since 2001. In the meantime, travel and tourism prices rose overall in the quarter. Passenger air transportation was at the forefront of the decline, falling 20.4% in the third quarter after falling 18.7% in the second quarter. Spending on international flights fell sharply after two quarters of strong demand and spending on domestic flights declined for the fourth consecutive quarter. Spending on accommodations sank as well, decreasing 3% in the third quarter. According to the report, room occupancy fell and while rates rose as hotels eliminated discounts intended to boost demand. (www.TravelAgentCentral.com, 12/17)

AAA: Fewer to Travel this Christmas

AAA is projecting a slight decline in the number of Americans traveling during the Christmas holiday period. Nearly 63.9 million Americans will travel 50 miles or more from home during the holidays, a decrease of 1.4 million travelers, or 2.1 percent, from last year's total of 65.3 million. This is the first decline in Christmas holiday travelers since 2002. AAA projected year-to-year decreases in the number of travelers for all five of the major travel holidays this year (Memorial Day, Fourth of July, Labor Day, Thanksgiving and Christmas).

More than 52.4 million Americans (82 percent of all holiday travelers) intend to travel by car or RV, a 1.2 percent decrease from the 53 million people who drove last year. Motorists across the country, on average, can expect to see gasoline prices about \$1.30 per gallon less than last year and 50 cents less than a month ago. Approximately 8.1 million, or 13 percent of holiday travelers, expect to travel by plane, an 8.5 percent decline from the 8.9 million travelers who flew last year. More than 3.33 million Americans plan to travel by train, bus or other mode of transportation. That is an increase of 0.7 percent from a year ago. (*Special to TA*)

Survey: More Affluent Travelers Less Affected by Economic Concerns

Most travel service suppliers - both domestic and international - will have to work harder in the months ahead to capture a meaningful share of travel demand, according to the results of the most recent "travelhorizons(TM)" survey of U.S. adults conducted the week of Oct. 13, 2008 says LeisureGroupTravel.com.

Co-authored by Ypartnership and the Travel Industry Association in Washington, D.C., this ongoing national survey of over 2,200 adults explores the travel intentions of Americans during the forthcoming six months. Among its findings:

- Fully seven out of 10 (71 percent) adults intend to take a leisure trip 50 miles or more from home or overnight during the next six months. This is the same percentage recorded in the October 2007 travelhorizons(TM) survey, thereby revealing no degradation in the overall incidence of intentions to travel among Americans despite the turbulent financial times.
- Almost half (48 percent) of all respondents stated they were not planning to make any changes to their future travel plans as a result of the current financial crisis, although demand from more value-sensitive travelers is expected to show some decline. A robust 82 percent of those with an annual household income over \$75,000 intend to travel during the next six months, yet households with an annual income below \$75,000 are more likely to agree that "travel is too expensive" and are "reevaluating their travel plans because of budget concerns" according to the survey.
- Among the seven out of ten adults planning a trip during the next six months, more than 68 percent agree the price of gas will affect their vacation behavior, while 54 percent mention the price of dining out in restaurants. Approximately half (50 percent) consider the tightening of credit and rising cost of health care (46 percent) when planning vacations.
- Nearly one-third (38 percent) agree the value of their retirement fund directly influences their vacation behavior, while 34 percent consider high levels of personal debt and job insecurity (30 percent) as significant. Only one out of four (26 percent) respondents cited the reduced value of their home as a consideration that affected their vacation planning behavior, and a comparable percentage cited a possible increase in their mortgage payment.
- Fully seven out of ten adults who are planning a trip during the next six months intend to go online to comparison shop for the best prices. Those with an annual household income over \$75,000 are significantly more likely to comparison shop for prices and rates than those with an annual household income of less than \$75,000 (64 percent compared to 58 percent).

"The results of this study reveal that demand for travel services in coming months will increasingly come from more affluent travelers," said Yesawich. "Yet, these individuals will also be aggressive comparison shoppers to ensure they get what they consider to be rightfully theirs in a buyers' market - a good deal."